

Petal Tones



National Capital Area Chapter of the Gesneriad Society Newsletter

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Barb's *Episcia* 'Harmony's Slinky Pink'

President's Message **Barb Stewart**

Kohleria are red, violets are blue, I have too many gesneriads. How about you?

Whether you have too many gesneriads (is that possible?) or not enough, the propagation workshop is the place to be this Saturday. The propagation workshop is always a popular event where we trim overgrown plants, pull out surplus rhizomes, and separate seedlings to share and pot up for the show sales table. We make a big mess, but have a fun time doing it. We had a great turnout last month for our first meeting of the year, even though it was postponed due to wintery weather. Here in central Virginia, we have been experiencing a roller coaster of winter and spring weather. I recently attended a talk at a local garden center on indoor seed starting. I have bulbs I did not get around to planting last fall,

NCAC meetings are held at BEHNKES NURSERIES
11300 Baltimore Ave, Beltsville, MD 20705
Behnkes opens at 8:00am if you would like to browse and shop before the meeting. We gather at 10am to get set up, with the meeting beginning at 10:30am. Meet the second Saturday of the month. \$10 yearly dues.
Please pay now for 2017.

February 18th 2017: Propagation Workshop

March 11th 2017: *Kohleria* - an interesting and easy to grow rhizomatous genus.

April 8th 2017: African Violets with unusual leaves and flowers (bustle, spoon, girl leaves, chimeras, longiflora)

so I put them in pots to enjoy indoors. I also have Gesneriad seedlings that have sprouted in mass quantities and more seeds to be planted. Even though Punxsutawney Phil says winter is still with us, our plants are ready for spring, and frankly, so am I. There is nothing like the propagation workshop to get us inspired for a spring show. Also, don't forget to invite a friend. This is a great opportunity to get new folks introduced to gesneriads they have not seen or grown before, and a great place to learn more about the plants we grow. This month we are featuring a lesser grown *Gesneriad* plant, *Lysionotus*, as the plant of the month. There is not a lot of culture information available, so our best resource is each other and our personal experience growing this plant. Bring one if you can. If you don't have one to bring, we would love to see something else you are growing well or something you need advice on. Perhaps we can help you get it in show condition by May. Also, try your hand at a simple design. It can be a cut blossom arrangement, or a foliage only design. Only one rule: plant material must be predominately gesneriads. Have some fun with it.

Hope to see you Saturday!

Thinking Outside the Box, a report on the November meeting program by Paul Susi

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Karyn Cichocki was our guest speaker at the November meeting. Karyn has been growing gesneriads for at least 20 years in her home in northern New Jersey, and she is a member of the Frelinghuysen Arboretum (NJ) chapter of the Gesneriad Society. She is also a master judge and a member of the Seed Fund Committee. It is always a pleasure to have Karyn speak to us, since she offers insights regarding both horticulture and design. At the November meeting, Karyn highlighted the different ways of growing gesneriads.

The standard methods of a three-part soil-less mix in a standard pot do not always work and, with all the new introductions, we need to investigate how our plants grow in the wild to give both species and hybrids the conditions they need in which to thrive.

Karyn gave us some information on where she grows: in an unheated basement, with high temperatures in upper 50s in the winter. The average humidity is about 50%. These conditions, of course, immediately eliminate genera that are “cold” sensitive, such as *Episcias* or thin-stemmed *Columnneas*.

For the longest time, Karyn had been growing in regular soilless mix but then she discovered that using fiberglass rock wool cubes is another way to grow some epiphytes. She showed us a *Columnnea* from one of John L. Clark’s collections, which had done poorly in soil-less mix but now has improved dramatically in the rock wool cubes. In addition to using the cubes, Karyn put the plant in an Oyama pot (this is a pot with a built in reservoir, almost like a self-wicking pot).

She is also growing epiphytic *Columnneas* in sphagnum moss in mesh orchid pots. These pots must have a saucer to catch overflow water. These are placed at end of 4-tube T8 tube fixture.

For some other gesneriads, such as *Petrocosmea*, *Primulina* and *Henckelia*, Karyn uses .25” to .5” stones as a growing medium. She first places about one inch of perlite at bottom of pot, places the root ball of the plant (with only the mix that is

clinging to the root ball) in the pot and then surrounds the root ball with the stones. Karyn also uses this method for species violets, which in nature grow in rocky crevices, with much success.

Sunleaves Rocks (“the rocks that don’t roll”) and Leca stones (made of clay) are both good media that are used to mimic natural conditions of rock-growing gesneriads.

She also uses Espoma Soil Perfector as a conditioner for the mix. These products are available on Amazon (see source list at the end of the article). Karyn suggested checking images of plants growing in nature to get an idea of how plants are growing in their natural habitats.

For *Sinningia*, she has tried growing tubers in Tufa rock. (NCAC editor note: feather rock that Jim demonstrated last month for NCAC)

She is also growing *Streptocarpus thompsonii* in a tree-fern pot and has a specimen that is several years old. *Primulina atropurpurea* had been started in a solo cup and then transplanted to five-inch pan pot. Perlite was placed at the bottom of the pot, then some rocks, then the plant and then some mix to fill in any spaces around the root ball. The same process was used for *Henckelia ceratoscyphus*. Both plants are doing well.

Another medium that Karyn uses is wafer sphagnum moss, which is also available on Amazon. Karyn has had problems with *Nematanthus fritschii*, which she repotted it into the reconstituted wafer sphagnum moss without any other media (e.g., rocks). As a demonstration during the program, she lined the insides of a black orchid net pot with the sphagnum moss (she had meant to plant it in the tree fern pot but did the orchid pot instead!) and made a pocket for the plant. The plant was placed in the pocket with whatever mix was clinging to the root ball. Karyn discussed the propensity of some of the rhizomatous Asian plants that have their rhizomes go around and around the pot several times before they finally come up above the growing medium to form new plants. Bill Price once showed a *Lysionotus* in a black plastic orchid net pot, which has slotted sides. This type of pot allows the rhizomes to come out from the side of the pot in a more natural growth pattern.

Karyn lines the bottom and sides of these pots with matted sheet moss, puts a layer of soilless mix on the bottom and then inserts the plant (filling around the plant with the soil mix). The pots are then placed in a

saucer and are top watered allowing any run off to stay in the saucer. This method works very well for *Lysionotus* and *Hemiboea*.

As for the specifics of her growing set up, Karyn mentioned that she grows mostly under T8 fixtures, both two tubes and four tubes, and the lights are on for 10 hours. She has also used LED tubes (daylight/cool white combo) but has burnt quite a few plants. She has decided to move all her *Sinningias* to the LED fixtures since there is a lot of light for them. When switching to LEDs, she reminded us that they can be used in T8 fixtures without any change to the ballast. LEDs seem to need to be on for fewer hours (maybe as few as 8) and the ballasts produce less heat with LED lights in the fixtures.

As for fertilizing, plants in the Oyama pots are fertilized at the rate of ¼ tsp. of fertilizer to gallon of water for constant feed. Karyn's fertilizers of choice are Plant Marvel (12-31-14), Miracle-Gro Tomato Fertilizer (18-18-21), Cape Cod Violetry's AV Special (12-36-14), Orchid Plus (20-14-13) and Jobe's Organic Tomato Fertilizer (3-0-4). She also adds ¼ tsp. of Epsom salt to the fertilizer water once a month, which helps the plants to be able to absorb the nutrients. Karyn encourages growers to try new methods, but any new methods should be tried with one plant at a time. Planting in rocks, stones or moss seems to give the plant something that it is missing when planted in straight mix – possibly more aeration of roots. Take a chance and try out a new potting method and watch your plants thrive!

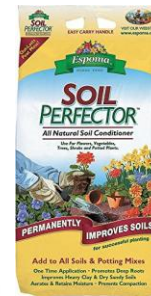
Here are links on Amazon for the various products that Karyn uses; check other sites for pricing and shipping.

- Spagmoss

https://www.amazon.com/SPECIAL-Spagmoss-Zealand-Sphagnum-Liters/dp/B00EKKD7P6/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1480295590&sr=8-1-spons&keywords=Spagmoss&psc=1

- Epsoma soil perfector

http://amzn.to/2fFHDMP_o
https://www.amazon.com/Espoma-SPF30-Soil-Perfector-30/dp/B00TN8F906/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1480295655&sr=8-fkmr0&keywords=Epsoma+soil+perfector



[Sunleaves rocks](#)

http://amzn.to/2gzD62N_o
https://www.amazon.com/Sunleaves-Rocks-0-25-0-5-25L/dp/B0055F48MQ/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1480295767&sr=8-1&keywords=Sunleaves+rocks

- Orchid Net pots – I usually get them from but they also sell on Amazon

[RePotMe - https://www.repotme.com/orchid-pots/NetPots.html](https://www.repotme.com/orchid-pots/NetPots.html)

NCAC Editor Note: I bought Sunrocks on December 24th for \$13.67 and now they are \$47.50

Desperately Seeking

Kitty Hedgepeth.....*Sinningia Leucotricha* tuber
 Kitty Hedgepeth.....*Episcia suomi* or any yellow
 Donna Beverin.....*Sinningia* ‘Carnaval’
 Hybrid by Dave Zaitlin
 Donna.....*Sinningia kautskyi*
 Donna*Sinningia* ‘Amizade’

Dear Mr. Gesneriad

I rec'd the long cutting of *Sinningia* ‘Peridot's Patchwork Quilt’ and there is a bump on the stem that looks like a little tuber. Advice on what I should



do with this little tuber to start a plant? Also the main cutting has a very long stem. Should I cut it way back to just a node or two? Is it ok to plant a stem of about 4-5 inches like I did or will that delay the

process? I just ordered some Clonex.

Mr. G: I would cut the crown down to the 4-6 healthiest leaves and root them. Then you can take the rest of the stem and cut it into short pieces of 4 leaf axils (even without leaves). Bury bottom set of axils. You should get sprouts out of the two axils above the soil. When I say bury two, I mean one pair of axils opposite each other.



Mr. Gesneriad. Help, PLEASE!! I am in need of an effective way to deal with mildew/fungus problems on *Sinningias*, *Streptocarpus*, and even on one *Episcia*. I've tried many things over the past couple of years -

Peroxide, Listerine (which appears to kill the leaves as well as the fungus) and commercial fungicides. I never had a problem before the year that we had Downy Mildew on my outdoor impatiens. After that it seemed to slowly affect many of my *Sinningias* and it killed the *Streptocarpus* plants. Any help would be greatly appreciated. Thanks. Sherry

Sherry: 'Immunox' is a systemic fungicide which



helps provide long-term prevention. It's generally considered to be safer than caffeine to humans. Another thing to consider is running your lights at night instead of during the

day. The drop in temperature at night which helps promote the mildew can be reduced when the nights are on at night when



temperatures would normally drop. All it takes is a ten degree temperature drop at night to provide the ideal conditions for mildew spores to germinate and take over. After seeing your photos I recommend using an Immunox that contains and insecticide in addition to the fungicide as there may be some foliar mealy bugs a long with the severe mildew on some of your plants. Good luck! Mr. Gesneriad



Plant of the Month: *Lysionotus*

Barbara Stewart

Lysionotus is a rhizomatous plant from Southeast Asia. It is an epiphyte which grows on trees in the forests, on moss covered rocks along streams, or in valleys. It has been used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat various diseases. *Lysionotus* grow in habitat similar to *Petrocosmea* and can tolerate



Lysionotus "Pudding", grown and exhibited by Bill Price at the 2012 convention in Seattle.

cooler temperatures than other *Gesneriads*. If grown outdoors, they are hardy in zones 6a-9b with some varieties able to withstand temperatures below 0 F. They prefer to be grown in consistently moist soil. I am currently growing 2 varieties: *Lysionotus pauciflorus* "Ikada" and *Lysionotus* "Pudding". While most *Lysionotus* have flowers in various shades of lavender to white, L. "Pudding" is the first



L. 'Pudding' aerial roots



L. *pauciflorus* 'Ikada'

cultivar to have yellow flowers. I have not seen either of my plants bloom, but they should bloom in late summer and fall. I am growing L. "Ikada" in a clay strawberry jar planter which gives it room to expand its rhizomes and produce shoots that grow out of the side pockets. It is grown on my light stand on matting which frequently dries out, so it probably does not get the consistent moist soil it would like. However, it seems to take my culture fairly well. L. "Pudding" is a newer plant for me which grows in a clay pot on a wicking tub. It is not under fluorescent lights, but grown in front of a window. Neither of these plants has ever gone dormant for me. *Lysionotus* are not attractive plants to grow for ornamental foliage, so I

would like to find out what it needs to bloom. With habitat similar to *Petrocosmea*, I suspect the warm temperatures in the Richmond area or perhaps a lack of a winter rest period, as I seldom get bloom on my *Petrocosmea* either. Hopefully, other growers can share culture information on how to grow and bloom this interesting *Gesneriad*.

March 2017: Plant of the Month *Kohleria*

January 2017 Meeting

Jim Roberts gave an excellent talk and demonstration about how to grow *Gesneriads* in/on Feather Rock, also sometimes called Tufa, but in truth the accurate name is Tuff, a volcanic stone that is porous, light weight, sharp and Ph neutral. (In researching Tufa, there is another rock called Tufa or Travertine made of limestone which is different from the volcanic feather rock) Jim recommends soaking the rock for



an hour or more. The rock can be easily drilled to create holes or pockets in which a tuber or root can be placed for a plant to grow. Small pins can be pushed in the rock easily to help stabilize the plant in place until developing roots that will meander and grow down into the crevices of the rock, and hold the *Gesneriad* in place. A small amount of soil that is on the plant is all that is needed or you could use a small amount of sphagnum moss when attaching the plant or tuber to the rock.

Jim took his reciprocating saw (with metal cutting blade) and a drill with a circle attachment, to cut holes in the rock to create a space to hold a plant.



Notice here Jim said the tuber can be larger than the hole and will take hold after growing roots.

Once he cut the hole he used a chisel and hammer to tap out the center of the hole to make a pot like space. Then he drilled thru the bottom of the rock to the hole at the top of the rock where he threaded a heavy piece of yarn to make a wick for watering. Other plants like Begonia, moss and ferns can also be used along with *Gesneriads*. The plants do not need much fertilizer but you can add some time release grains in the sphagnum moss. Another way to fertilize is to add it to the water when you water the rock or to the water the rock is sitting in, if you are wick watering. Some plants that can grow vertically on rock are *Petrocosmea*, *Streptocarpus* and *Sinningia*. A nice small piece of Feather Rock could provide a home for some small *Sinningias* like pusilla and would look very nice!

Jim found Feather Rock at The Stone Store, 7535 Railroad Avenue, Harman's, MD 21077 for .60 a pound. He generously made two stone displays which he gave members via the raffle table! Thanks Jim for such an enjoyable and educational program!

Editor has videos of Jim's program for those who are interested.



Growing Tips



Kitty Hedgepeth's Creative Tip. Dollar Tree has these wonderful clear plastic bowls. They're only a dollar each, are twelve inches across, and are dome shaped. They are perfect for creating a terrarium environment for rooting cuttings or for growing Gesneriads that require constant high humidity.



I recently repotted my *Episcias* and put down the crowns to root. The attached photos illustrate my improvised terrarium environment using two of these bowls held together with clips from Staples. The *Episcia* cuttings have been down for eight days. Notice, one crown is already blooming. The plant is *Episcia* 'Faded Jade'.

Bloomin' Now



Kitty's *Streptocarpus* 'Kahinta'



Barb's *Sinningia* 'Deep Purple Dreaming'

Bloomin' Now cont'



Barb's *Streptocarpus* 'Miss Mabel'



Barb's *Streptocarpus* 'Nery'



Barb's *Nautilocalyx lynchii*



Close up of *Nautilocalyx lynchii* tubers



Johanna's *Aeschynanthus*





Johanna's *Aeschynanthus* close-up



Johanna's *Amalaphyllon* bloom

Programs Planned for 2017

- January 14 - workshop on growing in feather rock.
- February 11 - Propagation Workshop
- March 11 - *Kohleria* - an interesting and easy to grow rhizomatous genus.
- April 8 - African Violets with unusual leaves or flowers (bustle leaves, spooned, girl, longifolia, chimera)
- May 13 - Show workshop - making sure everything is ready for the show on the 20th
- Show schedule: May 19 – 21, 2017
May 19 - Show entries and set-up
May 20 - last minute entries. Judging. Sales and show open until Sunday, May 21 at 4.
- June 10 - Growing Gesneriads outdoors for the Summer
- July & August - TBD (picnic?)
- September 9 - Jim and Drew's Ecuador trip PowerPoint
- October 21 (third weekend - Orchid Show on second weekend) - Judges School for new judges and Student judges
- November 11 - Miniature Sinningia - growing these small wonders in Glass Containers - GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS!
- December - Holiday Party at a member's home.

Plants of the Month for 2017

February	<i>Lysionotus</i>
March	<i>Kohleria</i>
April	<i>Saintpaulia</i>
May	Show plants
June	<i>Nematanthus</i>
July	<i>Achimenes</i>
August	<i>Petrocosmea</i>
September	<i>Gasteranthus</i>
October	N/A
November	Mini <i>Sinningia</i>
December	<i>Streptocarpus</i>



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